A.S.O.R. - newsletter - Jer. School

NOTED
DRF

AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

JERUSALEM AND BAGHDAD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

Confidential *Not for publication*

~~Newsletter #6 1950-51 Jerusalem, March 22, 1951~~

In the January Newsletter Dr. Pritchard reported on the opening up of the excavation at Jericho and the discovery of a palace lying to the south-west of the tell excavated by Dr. Kelso last year. Since then the work of clearing the site has proceeded steadily and the outline of the palace has been laid bare. In the main structure on the north side a hypocaust was found, and in the west wing the remains of a colonnaded court. The stylobate of another colonnade was found running around the central court. Since a report of the excavation will appear in the Bulletin I will not give a detailed account here.

The campaign has made heavy demands on the physical stamina and archaeological enthusiasm of those most directly involved, especially on Dr. Pritchard, who was in active charge of field operations, and on the four Fellows of the School. Rising at 5.30 a.m. may be an interesting experience once in a lifetime, but when the experience is repeated morning after morning for over two months, even sunrises lose their beauty. I must admit, however, that as we rounded the corner of Bethany each morning on our way down to the dig, the sight of the sun rising over the blue hills of Transjordan was some compensation for our efforts.

Yesterday, March 21st, we celebrated the advent of spring by bringing the Jericho dig definitely to a close. The site will be left open for a while in case further study of some points is needed. After that it will be filled in. This may seem strange, after all the labour and expense of uncovering it. But there are two reasons for filling in. In the first place, our agreement with the owners of the land, who did not charge us a cent for the examination of it, was that we would restore it to its original condition. Secondly, in view of the nature of the walls, it is improbable that they would be able long to withstand the vagaries of the weather, but would crumble into shapeless heaps of stone. Hence, before another year has passed, tomato and bean plants again will flourish above the courts and halls where once some Roman proudly strutted.

The big event of February was the arrival of the President of the Schools, Dr. Carl H. Kraeling. Dr. Pritchard went up to Beirut to meet him and escort him to Jerusalem. Some difficulty arose in connection with the new car which Dr. Kraeling was bringing for the School, with the result that instead of reaching Jerusalem on the 8th, they arrived on the 10th. That cut short the President's stay to two days. But to have him with us for even that brief period was a great stimulus. In April he and Mrs. Kraeling will be returning to the School when we hope to extend to them a more formal and appropriate welcome.

The arrival of the new car, a bright red Chevrolet suburban carry-all, created almost as much joy as the arrival of the President. Imran, our driver, was at first doubtful if any new car could possibly possess the merits which he had found in the old Pontiac. But his loyalty was soon transferred. The possession of two cars has greatly increased the service potentialities of the School. One is used constantly for transporting personnel and supplies to the dig. The other is

available, but only with an approved driver, for the remaining members of the School to make field trips.

It would be difficult to list all the activities of the members of the School during the last two months. The more permanent members have, of course, been tied most of the time to the Jericho dig. The others have been flitting about like sparrows - one day to Bethlehem or Hebron, the next to Ain Feshka, Jerash, or Samaria, or taking walks in and about Jerusalem. Those scholars who have taken out membership in the Schools find, when they come to Jerusalem, that they have made a very profitable investment in that they have a base of operations and are provided with facilities to see the country.

One of the most arduous trips made recently was that to Qarn Surtabeh, a high peak west of Nablus, near the edge of the Jordan valley. It is thought to be the site of the Maccabaean fortress of Alexandrium. Two different excursions were made to this spot. The first party consisted of the Mortons, Ogdens, and Drs. Blair and Malcorian. They brought back such a glowing account of their adventure that the rest of us decided to follow in their footsteps. The second party consisted of Miss Mowry, Mr. Thompson, the Tushinghams, and the three Winnetts. On the way up the Jordan valley we stopped to examine the ruins of Phasaelis, one of the cities founded by Herod the Great. The ruins are quite extensive, and the site very accessible and well worth excavating. While there we observed large numbers of little locusts on the ground. We reported our discovery to the local police post which promised to take action to dispose of them. It is said that the dry season has brought considerable trouble from locusts in parts of Transjordan. The two-hour climb up Qarn Surtabeh proved to be most exhausting, but we all made it. From the top a good view is obtained of the junction of the Wady Fara' with the Jordan plain. One is impressed by the contrast between this part of the Jordan valley and the part further south. In the Jericho area the plain is a dry and barren expanse except for occasional patches of green. Opposite Surtabeh it is a sea of green, the whole bed of the valley being intensively cultivated. This seems to be true as far north as the eye can see. On descending from Surtabeh we drove north and then turned east to the Damieh bridge. The Damieh crossing (bib. Adamah) must have played an important role in the history of Palestine, since the highway leading from it runs up the Wady Fara' to the very heart of the country, the Shechem-Nablus district. The present bridge at Damieh is the old Allenby bridge which used to span the Jordan at Jericho. Securing a few photographs of the crossing we turned back and headed up the Wady Fara' to Nablus. I was surprised to discover how fertile the wady is. He who wishes to get an idea of the economic resources of the country should not fail to visit this area.

Another excursion was to Khirbet el-Mefjer, old Jericho, and the Mount of Temptation. In spite of the possession of two cars, the number of persons at the School has been so great recently that it has been impossible for us all to travel as a group. Hence this second expedition was also made by two parties going at different times. Khirbet el-Mefjer is the site of a palace belonging to the Umayyad caliph Hisham (A.D. 724-743). Mr. Baramki, the excavator of the palace, acted as guide. The site is a most impressive one, with its well-preserved baths and wonderfully carved stones and plaster. Retracing our steps through the wretched refugee camps which here dot the landscape, we stopped at the mound of ancient Jericho, which lies about two miles north of Roman Jericho where we have been excavating. The walls of the ancient city have so disintegrated and the site has been so chopped up by excavation that it is difficult to make much sense of it. Our next stop was at a monastery garden at the foot of the Mount of Temptation. Here we ate our lunch beside the rushing water. Then we began the ascent of the mountain. Part way up we noticed a large cave in which an Arab family was living. In front of the cave was a cow. How that cow ever got up there I can't imagine. Incidentally, we saw a cow outside a cave on the side of Qarn Surtabeh. Cave-dwellers must have a special liking for cows. Half way up, the

trail leads through a Greek Orthodox monastery. We hammered at the door and finally aroused one of the monks who let us in and served us a much appreciated cup of coffee. Twenty minutes of further climbing up the zigzag path brought us to the top. The view from the summit over the whole Jericho area is really magnificent. On this lofty per ch Jesus is said to have been dared by Satan to tempt Providence by casting himself down headlong.

For a very few weeks the hills between Jerusalem and Jericho assumed a mantle of green. The transformation was particularly noticeable in the area between Jerusalem and the Inn of the Good Samaritan. The Bedawin moved in and their black tents sprang up at a number of points along the road. In the late afternoon, driving back from Jericho, we would see numerous flocks of sheep and goats with their attendant shepherds. The new-born lambs and kids in particular attracted our attention. Some wild flowers appeared but the winter rains have been so few and far between that it is only in the northern part of the country that they have appeared in their accustomed profusion. Last Sunday we had quite a good rain, but the water supply is still dangerously low.

Arrivals at the School during the months of February and March include the following: Professor R.B.Y.Scott of the Faculty of Divinity, McGill University, Montreal; Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Tushingham of the Oriental Institute, Chicago; Dr. Charles Eberhardt of Davidson College, Davidson, N.C.; and Dr. and Mrs. Free of Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. Professor Scott is making a study of the weather phenomena of the country and a few evenings ago gave us a most interesting and informative lecture on the subject. Guests at dinner have included the following: Professor and Mrs. G.C.Oxtoby and their three children, Willard, Lowell, and Louise, of San Anselmo, Calif; Dr. and Mrs. Paul J.Goodwin of San Jose, Calif; Miss von Gonzenbach and Mr. C.Clairmont, archaeologists from Zürich, Switzerland; and Mr. Ernest A. Sundberg of Aramco, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Professor T.Cuyler Young of Princeton was with us for four days on his way to Teheran. Other guests for brief periods were Mr. and Mrs. Carl Kissling of the American Mission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dr. and Mrs. G.B.Williamson of Kansas City, Mo.; and Mr. John Breier of Stanford University. A few social events have been sandwiched into our very busy program. I might mention in particular a tea for the members of the American Consular staff: Mr. and Mrs. S.R.Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Pennyman, Mr. Root and Mr. Newbury. The Easter season is upon us and the School is full, in fact almost bursting at the seams.

F.V.Winnett, Director.